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AUTHOR Geary, Patricia A.
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ABSTRACT

Despite enormous political, social, and psychological forces working against them, some inner city black youths defy the odds and succeed academically. This study focuses on a group of successful at-risk minority students in an urban secondary school, and in particular on their student experience, including interactions with school culture, student social groups, and teachers. An ethnographic study was chosen as methodology for the investigation. The site selected was an all black inner city high school in a major southern center. The 35 students studied were participants in a newly-formed college preparatory program. Research findings revealed the strong influence of both informal and formal social groups, for which structures, criteria, and rationales are presented. Classrooms were dominated by teacher-established rules stated in positive and negative imperatives; hallways were covered with bulletin board maxims in the form of exhortations, adages/slogans, and platitudes. Student responses to teachers were diverse, but tended to center on interpersonal relations and professional competence as bases for good or bad ratings. Research implications suggest that the school's interacting complexities argue for multi-dimensional rather than merely quantitative reform measures and for increased student input in critical school operations. The study includes four figures and a list of 11 references. (AF)

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The Student Experience: At-Risk, College Prep, Minority Teenagers in an Urban High School

Patricia A. Geary

Georgian Court College
Lakewood, New Jersey 08701

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INTRODUCTION

The educational reform movement of the 80s is, in part, a response to the continuing academic failure of millions of American youth, particularly Blacks. During the last four decades, the dominant explanations educational researchers used to explain this failure centered on student deprivation, genetic deficit, and culture conflict. While these theories did offer some general predictions, as well as statistical and correlational data, these perspectives were examined and dismissed as inadequate because they not only failed to offer pertinent insights regarding the education of minorities, but also tended to stereotype groups while viewing disparities in cognitive and linguistic behaviors with a biased eye.

As a result of dozens of years of research, both the good and the misguided, recent educational reform, particularly in America's high schools, has centered mainly on the creation of quantitative solutions, e.g., increases in academic requirements; additional mandatory courses, particularly in foreign languages, mathematics, and science; higher credit requirements for graduation; exit exams, particularly in English, writing, and mathematics; minimum grades for all courses; and "no-pass, no-play" rules primarily affecting student athletes (Bennett, 1987; U.S. Department of Education, 1984). A May, 1988, Newsweek cover article describes the extent of such reforms.

> All 50 states have adopted some form of reforms.... More than a dozen have completely overhauled school systems. Roughly 40 states have raised high school graduation requirements; in 19, students must pass a test to receive diplomas. (Beck, Namuth, Miller, & Wright, 1988, p. 55)

In addition, as Timar and Karp (1989) note, "Since 1983 the states have generated more rules and regulations about all aspects of education than in the previous 20 years" (p. 506).

This educational reform movement is very real; however, millions of students in the nation's urban centers have been either ignored or bypassed (Cuban, 1989). Many students continue to mark time, "unable to see schooling as related to their lives" (Carnegie Foundation, 1988, p. 25). Obviously, there are clear exceptions to the often dismal state of urban schools; however, they are exceptions.

Lest past reform inadequacies be repeated, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in a recent report cautions those involved in the current wave of educational reform to be wary of generating merely quantitative solutions to crucial educational issues. Furthermore, the Carnegie Foundation warns that numerous so-called innovations are

> irrelevant to many children--largely Black and Hispanic--in our urban schools...There is...

> a disturbing gap between reform rhetoric and results. (cited in Beck, Namuth, Miller, & Wright, 1988, p. 54)

Others hasten to add that reforms must not only be "culturally relevant" if they are to meet the needs of Black students, but they also must bear witness to the barriers to academic success facing Blacks. As Charles Thomas, former president of the National Alliance of Black School Educators, notes:

> People assume that Blacks will be taken care of if everything else is in place, but I don't think that's going to happen. I think it will be business as usual, and a significant number of (Black) African-Americans will continue to fall through the cracks. (Snider, 1986, p. 16)

However, despite the overwhelming political, social, and psychological forces converging upon them, there are inner city black youths who defy the odds and succeed academically. They are not "falling through the cracks" even though they are frequently classified as "at risk" due to the serious socio-economic and/or personal problems which often lead other students in similar circumstances to drop out of school (Lewis, 1988; Snider, 1986, p.16; Wehlage, 1986). How do these students view themselves, their school environment, and their teachers? The significance of this study is its attempt to answer the above questions and others through an investigation of a group of "successful" at-risk secondary students. By learning about these students as they interact within their individual worlds and the larger environments of school and community, previously uncharted resources and reform directions are discovered for other at-risk students.

This examination focuses on one facet of the study, the "student experience." It offers an examination of the culture at one high school and a group of college prep students' immersion in that culture. Included are descriptions of student social groups as they existed within the school environment and within the context of a typical school day. Futhermore, this paper offers a discussion and analysis of teacher-generated, student-encountered school rules and maxims which existed to guide as well as to contain students. Finally, a concluding section offers students' perspectives on teachers as persons and as professionals.

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

In an attempt to answer questions concerning minority students' success, their view of themselves, their school, and their world, and to supplement and expand previous research, an ethnographic study was initiated which focused on the culture of a group of black, academically "successful" inner-city adolescents from the vantage point of the culture itself. The methodology chosen for the study incorporates the specific students', teachers', and administrators' situations,

experiences, and perceptions about schooling, as well as how these individuals ordinarily function and behave in school settings, into the data gathering and analytic procedures of the study. Rich, detailed data were gathered based on non-participant and participant observation, the collecting and stenographic recording of detailed fieldnotes, informal and formal interviews (the majority audio-recorded), and the amassing of school and system archival and historical records. In addition, artifacts, informant journals, school system documents, demographic data, and public records were collected. This kind of data collection obviously requires the researcher's prolonged immersion in the field. It also requires the use of multiple "lenses," the constant adjustment of the view, and, for the purposes of this study, the drawing into focus of the students' experience of school.

STUDY SITE SELECTION AND SETTING

The site was selected by the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools, University of Wisconsin- Madison, as part of a multi-site national study. *Lincoln High School came to the attention of the National Center because it had received some recognition from the community and press for its innovative programs aimed at at-risk black youth.

This study, conducted from August, 1986, to March, 1988, centers primarily on a group of at-risk tenth and eleventh grade (in 1986-1987) college prep students at Lincoln High School.

Lincoln, an all-black high school (grades 8-12) in inner-city Sutherland, had a student population of approximately 650 and a 60 member faculty which is 97% black. Located in a major southern center, Lincoln is embedded in an area where the inhabitants are politically and economically marginalized.

Lincoln High School, part of the Sutherland school system, is over 90% black in a city which has a majority black population. The area has had its share of racial strife, particularly in the 60s. Today, however, its citizens proudly note that civil rights are engrained in the city's legacy. In addition, the area's political leaders are black as are many of the city's entrepreneurs.

STUDENT SELECTION

The students in the study were selected during the previous scholastic year (1985-1986) as participants in a newly-formed "college preparatory program" called "Expanded Horizons." The stated purpose of the program was to bring these students together to "motivate each other" and to "help over-all...test scores, their image, and their outlook" (I AN 8.27.2; I-T AW 10.8.3) (See Table 1 for citation key). Students were selected based primarily on teacher

*In order to ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms are used throughout this paper in place of actual proper names.

Table 1

Key to Data Citation References

Code		Meaning
	INTERVIEWS	
I A W (1) (2) (3)	1.	Interview
	2.	A-Administrator T-Teacher H-Student (10th grade) J-Student (11th grade) O-Student (12th grade) p-Parent
	3.	Individual Code
I-T 11.5.3 (1) (2)	1.	Interview - audio taped
	2.	Month/day/transcript page
	FIELDNOTES	
FN 9.23.3 (1) (2)	1.	Fieldnotes
	2.	Month/day/typed page
E J Q V (1) (2) (3) (4)	1.	Essay
	2.	Journal entry
	3.	Questionnaire
	4.	Videotape
	DOCUMENTS	
Art		Article
Artf		Artifact

recommendations because Lincoln school officials felt that they could not "use test scores as an absolute determiner" as Lincoln students "don't do well on standardized tests--from the SAT down or the SFST (State Fundamental Skills Test) up" (I-T AW 10.8.3; FN 8.27.2; 10.22.1; 10.27.1). Therefore, if an individual teacher saw potential in a student, even if that student had not passed the SFST or did poor work in class, that individual was asked to be part of the program. "No student was automatically excluded" based on his/her test scores or course grades; however, it was determined by a faculty committee that pupils selected for the program place in the 60th percentile or above in mathematics and the 50th percentile or above in reading on a standardized measure of achievement (I-T AW 10.8.3). Nonetheless, a school counselor stated, "Any student could be college bound (prep) who wanted to be...I'm not going to deprive a child of trying. It could be my child or yours. They could be late bloomers" (I AW 10.29.1). As a result, a number of the chosen or self-selected students did not meet the original standardized mathematics and reading test requirements. Furthermore, during the course of the initial year of operation, additional students became part of the program while others dropped out or were removed. The remaining 35 college prep students, who were channeled into such classes as Spanish, Trigonometry, Calculus, Physics, Chemistry, and Advanced English, became the focus of this ethnographic investigation.

"Defying the Odds?"

After gaining entry in August, 1986, I began the research by spending three days a week on campus. This continued for the first three months. With notebook and tape recorder in hand, I visited and observed classes, often following a college prep student for an entire morning or afternoon session. I talked and interviewed students and teachers before and after classes and generally "hung around." Occasionally, verbatim conversations between and among students were recorded due to a facility with Gregg shorthand. These and other varied interactions and methods resulted in "thick" descriptive accounts.

Ongoing qualitative analysis was performed on both the observational and the transcribed data using a method analogous to analytic induction, called "constitutive ethnography" by Mehan (1975). In this procedure an initial analytic scheme is generated from a small piece of data, new data is continually applied, and the scheme is modified until a final scheme is generated.

During the next three months, two to three days a week, I continued to observe and talk with students, teachers, and administrators. Formal interviews were conducted with all college prep students and their teachers. Where possible, these interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. During this time I also became a participant, tutoring small groups of students, setting up and serving for school and community action group meetings, accompanying

students on local field trips, and assisting the school's academic bowl coach in preparing students for televised appearances. All of these activities put me in close contact with students and staff.

The remainder of the school year was spent in a continuation of these activities. Additional contact was sought with parents and older members of the community. During the summer months I remained in contact with a number of the students and their parents. In the fall of 1987, data collection continued; however, it was more focused based on the analysis completed to that date. Finally, all college prep students were again formally interviewed.

Research Findings
The Student Experience

As is the case in all social systems or social environments, students at Lincoln took their cues from the people with whom they interacted, particularly those they deemed important, and they monitored the expectations and desired behaviors those individuals held for them. In the context of the school social system, students came to recognize the roles they were to assume as well as the rules, expectations, beliefs, and values that significant adults, specifically parents, teachers, administrators, and their peers held for them, and these students then proceeded to act accordingly. One student commented on this when he said:

> All of us are born into this world with no sense of who and what we are. We interpret what's around us everyday. We pick up on the things we want to pick up on. (V JZ 4.8.2)

Students, therefore, were influenced by and, in turn, influenced the social environment at Lincoln.

Social Groups

To the student body, Lincoln High School was the center of their social lives, as Bernice Arenas, a tenth grade college prep student stated, "School is mostly social. While learning does take place, school is mostly socializing" (I-T JA 1.5.4). Figure 1 presents a schema which illustrates the structure of the informal student social groups at Lincoln and the structure, criteria, and rationale for Lincoln High School's formal social groupings.

Informal Social Groups

School officially "took in" at 8:15 each morning; however, during the morning gathering period prior to the start of classes, students with similar interests blocked together in informal social groups of twos or threes or moved from one group to another. In fact, the female senior who successfully moved from one social group to another, enjoyed friendships with a large number of schoolmates, and garnered

ample majority votes for the annual fall balloting was elected and crowned Miss Lincoln, a title and role which students, particularly females, viewed with awe and envy (I-T JE 12.7.5). Once a young woman had acquired the title, even wider social groupings were open to her (FN 10.22.1).

In a similar vein, many male social groups centered around sports or ROTC membership. Members of the football team could be seen huddled together with admiring male and female on-lookers nearby.

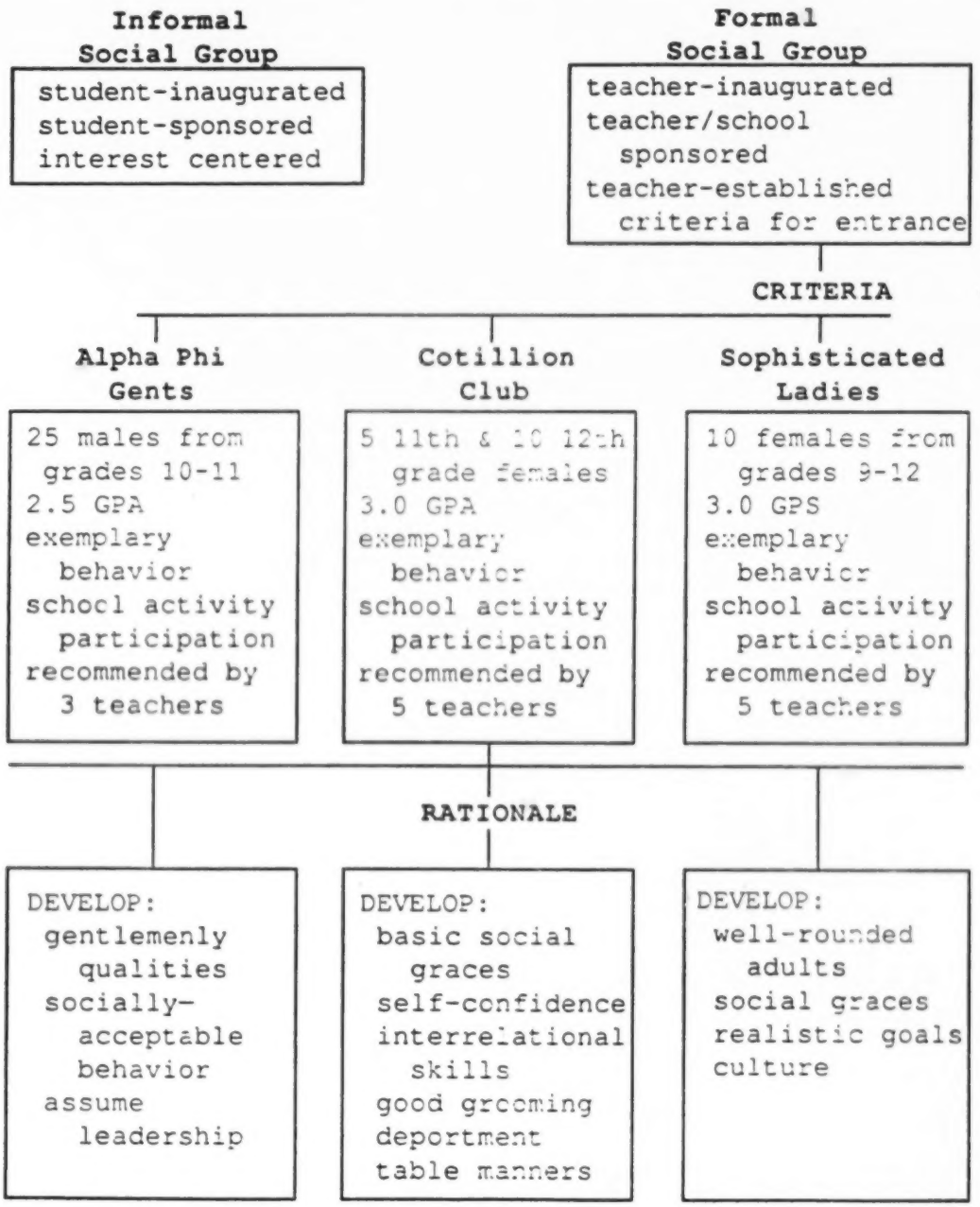
There were some Lincoln students who had few friends and did not, or were not welcomed into other students' informally-established social groups or networks. Furthermore, other students chose to socialize with only one other of the opposite sex. These couples could be found snuggling near back doorways or walking hand-in-hand toward the far reaches of the campus.

Formal Social Groups

In addition to student-inaugurated social groups at Lincoln, there were more formalized groups which also clustered together in the mornings. These groups were the result of teacher-generated, school-sponsored organizations which had number restrictions and specific criteria for membership (refer to figure 1). Three such Lincoln groups were the "Alpha Phi Gents," the "Cotillion Club," and the "Sophisticated Ladies." (Artf. 8.27.4; FN 6.3.3).

The "Alpha Phi Gents," easily recognizable by the bright yellow sweaters they wore, were 25 junior and senior males who each had at least a 2.5 grade point average, exemplary behavior, participated in school activities, and were recommended by three teachers. This service organization was designed "to develop gentleman [sic] qualities for each of its members," to assist members "to develop behavioral patterns that enhance their ability to get along with others and to exhibit manners becoming a gentleman," and "to provide assistance as needed to the school and community." "Alpha Phi Gents" were given and assumed leadership roles within the school and were called upon frequently to render service when guests were present on campus (Artf. Lincoln Teachers' Handbook).

The "Cotillion Club" was the female group alternative to the "Alphi Phi Gents." This group consisted of 5 juniors and 10 seniors who, unlike the "Alpha Phi Gents" 2.5 grade point average, had to have at least a 3.0 grade point average as well as exemplary behavior. They also had to participate in school activities and had to be recommended by five teachers. This organization was inaugurated "to teach the basic social graces and develop self-confidence and skills for competing in society." Teacher moderators worked with the selected young women in such areas as "deportment, grooming, table manners, planning social functions, and how to function as an upwardly mobile person." A faculty dance, mother/daughter tea, and students' formal introduction to society at the spring Lincoln Cotillion were all activities resulting from club membership (Artf. Lincoln Teachers' Handbook).



(Artf. Lincoln Teacher's Handbook)

Figure 1. Lincoln High School's social grouping network.

The "Sophisticated Ladies" group was open to ten students from each grade level. Qualifications matched those of the "Cotillion Club." The purpose of this club was "to work with a group of young ladies to develop the social graces necessary for competing successfully in today's society and to expose them to the cultural aspects of Sutherland, thereby, developing a group of "Sophisticated Ladies" (Artf. Lincoln Teachers' Handbook).

Lincoln students, particularly those in college prep, were primary participants in the above teacher-developed organizations (Lincoln High School Yearbooks 1986, 1987). These young men and women vied for membership, for their club association permitted them to interact with those most popular on campus.

In summary, there were at Lincoln two major social groupings: the groups students themselves devised and the groups formulated and executed by teachers and staff members. Most pupils fell into at least one such cluster, approximately 100 students fell into both, while the occasional student waited on the outside, looking in.

Classrooms: Organization, Rules, and Bulletin Board Maxims

As the school day began at Lincoln, the informal and formal clusters melded into the larger school population. Students entered classrooms in the various buildings and found that the rooms were set in the traditional mode with 25 or more wooden desks and attached chairs lined in straight rows or laboratory tables and chairs arranged in a horizontal fashion with all pupils facing the front of the room. In each class, pupils sat in pre-assigned seats (FN 9.11.1; FN 9.12.1; FN 9.12.5; FN 9.15.4; FN 9.17.1; FN 9.22.2; FN 9.23.1).

Each classroom also had one or more bulletin boards which were prepared by teachers prior to the opening of the school year. A number of teachers used these bulletin boards to display lists of teacher-established class rules. Different teachers expressed their class rules in different ways using either positive or negative imperatives. As figure 2 illustrates, both positive and negative imperatives dealt with students' time, materials, and student self-control.

Positive imperatives stated what students were asked to do or how they were required to behave. These rules included being on time and coming to class with the books, pencils, paper, etc. Positive imperatives also asked students to be courteous, listen, and keep their respective areas clean.

Negative imperatives, on the other hand, as shown in figure 2, indicated the classroom behaviors which teachers viewed as unacceptable. These rules requested, for example, that students not write in books, wander about the room, or eat, drink, or sleep in class. For both positive and negative imperatives, students were permitted no input, as the rules were already in place on the first day of school.

College prep students responded to the rules in a variety of ways. They either obeyed them, paid no attention to them, or they expressed their displeasure with them. Wilmata Mason,

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
	"DO"	"DON'T"
	TIME	
	Come each day	Be absent
I	Be on time	Come late
		Waste time
M		
	MATERIALS	
P		
	Bring books	Write in books
E	Bring paper & pencil	Tear pages out of books
R	Return all books	Remove books from room
A		
	STUDENT SELF-CONTROL	
T		
	Show respect	Be rude
I	Be courteous	Be disrespectful
	Sit down	Wander about the room
V		
	Talk quietly	Talk loudly
E	Keep area clean	Throw anything
	Wait to begin	Laugh loudly
S	Listen	Sit on windowsill
	Raise hand	Sleep
	Adhere to dress code	Wear combs or picks in hair
	Ask permission to speak	Chew gum
	Discuss	Eat
		Drink

Figure 2. Teacher-established classroom rules stated in positive and negative imperatives. (FN 9.19.4; FN 10.14.3; FN 1.28.3; FN 3.3.3; FN 3.17.3)

a college prep tenth grader remarked, "There are too many rules...All of the rules are crazy to me" (I-T HI 12.15.14). Josie Tucker also voiced her dissatisfaction when she said, "I hate the rules..."(I-T 12.10.5).

Teachers at Lincoln commented that rules were necessary for the smooth running of the educational operation and the motivation of students. These teachers also stated that pupils must already have or else must learn acceptable social behavior such as being reasonably quiet and still, waiting their turn, and being respectful to teachers and peers. One college prep teacher noted, "College prep student [sic] should never have to be reminded about their work or their conduct" (Q TV 4.21.2). Teachers, as well as administrators, emphasized that a lack of knowledge of these basic social mores would lead to classroom disorder, a loss in academic education, and subsequent lack of ability to adequately interact in society.

Lincoln's teachers also saw these behaviors as valuable learning in themselves--character education joined to academic education. However, without the students' active cooperation and general acquiescence, order could not have been maintained. Rules were, for the most part, voluntarily obeyed and pupils acted in a reasonably decorous manner as they went about the business of moving from class-to-class.

In addition to the teacher-generated posted class rules students encountered as they traveled from class to class, pupils were also greeted by hall or classroom bulletin board maxims. As is apparent in figures 3 and 4, these messages were in the form of exhortations which were phrases intended to advise, incite, or encourage; adages/slogans which were short maxims, proverbs or catchy phrases; and platitudes defined as trite remarks or statements (Morris, 1971). These bulletin board messages dealt with such areas as students' self-image, education's value, and their future careers. Certain messages also bore reference to a past in which Blacks were not accorded the same freedoms as Whites and the fact that these students had to overcome the vestiges of negativism and racism. "We must not allow any force to make us feel we don't count," one message read (FN 9.15.5). Other bulletin board messages stated, "Maintain a sense of dignity and self-respect" and "Live the dream" (of Dr. Martin Luther King) (FN 9.15.5).

It was interesting to note that at Lincoln, a vital presence in an almost totally black community, few classroom or hall bulletin boards, with the exception of a large board outside the administration office, depicted any message or reference to black history or achievement (FN 9.3.4; FN 12.9.2; FN 1.15.1; FN 2.20.4).

In conclusion, as students at Lincoln made their way from class to class, they were barraged by teacher-generated rules and bulletin board messages. Through these means, they were reminded of what to do and what not to do, of how to think of themselves, others, education, and their futures. They were advised not to quit, and not to start (using drugs). Above all, they were told to keep on keeping on.

EXHORTATIONS

Self-image:	Strive for the top because the bottom is already crowded. (FN 9.23.5)
	If you think number 1, then you can become number 1. Be the best you can be. (FN 9.12.3)
	Live the dream (of Martin Luther King). (FN 9.15.5)
	Maintain a sense of dignity and self-respect. (FN 9.15.5)
	We must not allow any force to make us think we don't count. (FN 9.15.5).
	Say "No" to alcohol and drugs. (FN 9.15.5)
Education/ Learning:	Fall into these good habits-listening, studying, writing, thinking. (FN 1.27.2)
	Education is the key to your dream, whatever it may be. You must study and must learn. Today, you begin a new journey. (FN 3.18.1)
	Drop out of school now and this is what they'll call you all your working life...BOY. (FN 9.19.4)
	Zoom into testing: SFST, SAT, PSAT. (FN 9.22.2)
Future/ Careers:	Without planning, you'll fail. Don't fail to plan. (FN 12.11.2)
	Don't be locked out. Mathematics opens career doors. Step into the future. (FN 10.6.3)
	Careers: Get a piece of the pie. (FN 9.23.1)

Figure 3. Bulletin board messages - Exhortations.

ADAGES/SLOGANS

Motivation:	Where there's a will, there's a way. (FN 9.3.2)
	A quitter never wins and a winner never quits. (FN 9.17.1).
Knowledge:	There's power in knowledge. (FN 9.3.4)
	Good readers make good writers. (FN 1.28.3)
	Strive for success. (FN 12.11.1)
Education:	Knowledge...Wisdom...Excellence. (FN 9.29.6)
	Students today...Leaders tomorrow. (FN 11.18.3)
Future:	Proper planning prevents poor performance. (FN 10.1.3)

PLATITUDES

Relationships:	The way to multiply happiness is to divide it. (FN 9.23.2)
Education:	It takes tools to build a good education. (FN 9.3.4)

Figure 4. Bulletin board messages: Adages/Slogans and Platitudes.

Teachers: Students' Perspectives

Students had definite opinions concerning their instructors. Teachers were a vital part of their lives and these adolescents expended energy daily discussing teachers and frequently classifying them as either "good" or "bad." Students based their categorizations of teachers not only on the interactions they had with them, but also on whether or not they thought a particular instructor was competent and professional. Because of its import to students, the following section will offer a glimpse into their conversations concerning teachers and the qualities they felt distinguished the "good" from the "bad."

The "Good" and the "Bad" Teacher: Students' Definitions

The thirty-five college prep students investigated in this study had definite views concerning "good" and "bad" teachers. Their views could be divided into two major areas: interpersonal relations and professional competence.

In general, these pupils saw their teachers as professionals possessing superordinate status within the school because of their age, competence, and authority within the setting. Because of this recognized status, students were willing to extend the proper deference; however, they expected, in return, respect for them as persons and as learners. They did not feel that they were qualitatively different from teachers, merely younger.

College prep students felt that their teachers should relate well to young people. They defined this quality as the ability to get along with them, to listen to what they had to say without being intrusive, to take them seriously, to be present to them, to understand, to help, to care, and to laugh with them (I-T HC 10.29.1; I-T HJ 12.8.4; I-T HK 12.8.3; I-T HM 12.10.4; I-T HW 12.8.2; I JE 12.7.2; I JH 11.5.1; I-T JM 12.15.4; I-T JR 1.5.4).

In matters relating to teacher-student interaction and classroom discipline, they admitted that teachers had the right to admonish them for what the teacher might consider inappropriate behavior; however, they argued that there could be a perfectly legitimate reason for the student to act as he/she did. It was the teacher's task, they believed, to ascertain the reason for the student's misbehavior and to respond from this knowledge rather than simply to the behavior. During a discussion on teachers, Farlanda Tevette and Javine Easley each respectively commented:

> Some people are just down on your back. They're not really listening to you. They're fussing saying, "You should know better." Mostly adults don't really understand teenagers ...when it comes down to drugs for instance. They don't know the reason why this teenager got on drugs. It could have been peer

> pressure, or it could have been a lot of reasons why....They need to understand the reasons so they can help. (I-T HT 12.10.3)

> We have good teachers, but one thing I think they lack is that they don't have patience enough sometimes. They fail to realize that everybody isn't the same...and there are an awful lot of people out there who don't expect black kids to do well. (I-T JE 12.7.2)

In addition to relating to young people, Lincoln's college prep students believed that teachers needed to be academically and pedagogically competent. Students tested and challenged teachers to ascertain whether or not they had the skills to act as professionals and as agents of the school's goals. If students perceived that a teacher or teachers lacked the ability to represent and further the goals of the system and the school, these teachers, in turn, lost their right to demand and receive the students' acquiescence. The following pupils commented on their experiences with one teacher whom students regarded as incompetent.

> We never read a story on our own. (T-W) reads it to us or has a tape...and in fifteen minutes half the class is asleep. It's boring....The kids run the class more than (T-W) does....I haven't learned one thing all year... (T-W) tells us what to write....All we do mostly is worksheets...and they're eighth grade level....I miss (T-W)'s class, come in the next day, take a quiz, and still pass.... (T-W) needs to get the students involved. (I-T HR 12.10.3-4)

> (T-W)'s too easy. Students take advantage of [T-W]. (I-T HW 12.8.1)

> There are lots of crazy people in there (class)... (T-W)'s just too nice. (I-T HC 12.8.2)

> I can't hear in that class...They don't want to listen....(T-W) be [sic] talking a lot on what it will be like outside. (I-T HD 12.8.2)

The students above perceived the teacher as "nice" but weak and this led some pupils to "take advantage" of the teacher and the classroom situation. Students also knew that they needed to be "involved" if learning was to take place.

Other college prep class members voiced differing opinions about their teachers.

> (TC) knows how to teach...(TC) goes step-by-step so you can understand and (TM) just fly [sic] through it and won't give time...

says (TM) has already taught us...but, we haven't had it before....Now (TC) really gets you to work....(TC) will go over it until you understand it and you can come after school for help....(TM) will tell some people not to come after school because (TM) doesn't like them or their attitude. (I-T JF 1.5.3)

We have lots to do, but (TE) makes sure you understand....(TC) will make you understand, too....(TT) is a good teacher, but I guess (TT) is running around...and stuff...(TT) is kind of behind this year. We have been on the same page for a long time. (I-T JG 12.15.5-6)

There are very few teachers who will sit down with the students and explain and explain until they get it. Some might do it, but, you get the impression that they are bored....Maybe I'm expecting too much. I think that they think they can get away with doing a lot of things they couldn't do if they were teaching rich kids or well-off ...and that makes me mad....(TO) cares and explains and will help. With other teachers, you have to make it on your own....It's real hard to be around people that don't expect anything from you. It's even harder when they're black and you're black. I hate to say this but sometimes we expect it from other races; we expect them to think that we can't do this and we can't do that, but it's hard when you run into somebody that's black and that has made something of himself and they think they're better than you. (I-T JE 12.7. 4-5; FN 12.15.3)

I don't think they teach you anything at this school. There are certain teachers that will teach you something. (TO) makes sure you get your work. (TO) know [sic] how to teach a class....We had to get up in the front of the class....(TO) will come in the class and (TO) will start the assignment...and we work until the end of the class. In other teachers' classes, we just come in there and the teacher be [sic] out of class. They don't even come into the class and teach... they probably go to the office or something. They say they was [sic] working on papers....(TO) gets down to it, but most of the teachers, they don't

> do that. They don't really do nothing... (TD) don't hardly never [sic] come into class and teach. (TD) come [sic] once in awhile. I believe (TD) be [sic] in the office...some kids don't care. I care. I want to learn something. It don't [sic] seem like I learn anything...there are just certain classes where you learn something. (I-T JJ 12.10.3-4)
>
> (TC) takes time to make sure you understand what we're doing and there's just something about (TC)'s teaching that makes you want to learn....(TC) will congratulate you and praise you....Plus, (TC)'s classes are usually small and, therefore, you can get the extra attention you need....(TC)'s not one of those teachers that stay out...and when they come back they don't feel like teaching us.(I-T JP 12.15.7)
>
> (TC) and (TO) are concerned and willing to help you at any time...no hastle if you don't understand....They'll sit there and make you understand. (I-T JR 1.5.4)
>
> (TV) used to talk all the time...never got the point across...used to talk about things that went on in life...instead of talking about things that go on in the classroom and the subject (TV)'s supposed to be teaching us. (I-T JO 12.11.3)
>
> (TC) and (TE) are good because they're stern when they're teaching. They don't wander off into another topic of discussion. They stick to what they start off with. Whatever they talk about leads to something else. They're trying to relate it to something. (I-T JM 12.15.6)

Summary

As is clearly evident from the above sample comments, college prep students at Lincoln had a diversity of ideas and opinions with regard to teachers. The majority of these young people felt that teachers had a responsibility to be competent, to instruct them, and to abide by the general principles of respect and fairness. Further, they expected teachers to come to know them and from this knowledge base to adapt and adjust to them and their individual needs. They, in turn, knew that they had to adapt and adjust to teachers. In addition, these students noted a desire for an ordered environment as a precondition to learning at Lincoln. Moreover, while there were differing student definitions for

order, there was agreement among the group that teachers, not other students, should manage and control classes and participants (I-T HW 12.8.1).

College prep students at Lincoln also felt that the academic goals embraced by teachers should be not only clearly understood by students, but that students should have a share in their creation (I-T HR 12.10.3). Finally, students required a shared understanding of what was to be accomplished in school and how academic success was best achieved at Lincoln (I-T JE 12.7.4).

Implications

Real student learning is mediated through the interaction of complex cultures, among them, the pupil and the school. Furthermore, competent school membership is identified as the ability of students to deal effectively, appropriately, and efficiently with and within the two cultures. The rate of student success or failure at Lincoln, therefore, should not be attributed solely to the particular instructional methods utilized. Neither should individual teachers or individual pupils be regarded as the basis for success or failure. Rather, success or failure resides in the interacting complexities of the school as a cultural and social institution and in the student as a multi-faceted human being influenced by and influencing the social and economic forces surrounding him/her.

Any school reform at Lincoln, therefore, must be multi-dimensional rather than simply quantitative and must address such critical issues as structure, organization, and the management of personnel. It must also address the quality of interaction between and among all those involved in the educational enterprise, particularly students.

As was noted, students have little or no input into the daily operation of the school. This includes the generation and implementation of rules and requirements which directly affect them. Students need to be encouraged to participate in the development of school and classroom rules and policies. This demands the creation of mechanisms which permit this type of interaction. Student suggestions and recommendations must be considered weighty and of great moment in the operation of the school and in the creation and implementation its programs. Furthermore, students must have voice regarding teacher competence and performance. Faculty evaluations by students should be standard, and must be brought to bear on faculty retention and tenure considerations.

According to Michaels (1988), the currect "second wave" of the educational reform movement is now underway. The first wave succeeded in raising standards, increasing course requirements, lengthening school days, and promulgating "no pass, no play" rules. It also brought education and educational issues to the forefront of American consciousness. However, as the Carnegie report (1986) noted:

> We are doing better on the old goals, often at the expense of making progress on the goals that count the most. Because we have defined the problem of schools in terms of decline from earlier standards, we have unwittingly chosen to face backwards when it is essential that we face forward. (pp. 15, 20)

The second wave must be distinguised by a new and more exciting agenda where administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students <u>together</u> create a collegial school environment in which high expectations, trust, and caring are hallmarks. This second wave must be marked by an examination of the philosophical underpinnings of the educational enterprise. Moreover, new schools need to be created--schools where young people are the center and where the task of teachers and administrators is to create opportunities, activities, and events which will lead students to "the threshold of commitment to learning" (Michaels, 1988, p. 5).

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